

REMARKS

This application was originally filed on 6 August 2003 with twenty one claims, three of which were written in independent form. Claims 13-21 have been withdrawn as being directed to a non-elected invention. No claims have been allowed. Claims 1, 3, 8, and 11 have been amended to broaden the claims and clarify what is being claimed.

Claim 1 was rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 6,162,323 to Koshimizu. The Examiner stated, "Koshimizu discloses . . . "said gap separation . . . is made variable."

Claim 1 has been amended to clarify the "gap between said upper and lower grid plates is larger in a center portion than in a perimeter portion" as described in the specification. Koshimizu does not show, teach, or suggest this feature.

Claim 8 was rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over U.S. Patent No. 6,162,323 to Koshimizu in view of U.S. Patent No. 5,453,305 to Lee, and further in view of U.S. Patent No. 5,248,371 to Maher et al. The Examiner stated, "Maher discloses a grid plate (90) with a series of variable diameter holes (figure 4A, col. 8, lines 52-53)."

Claim 1 has been amended to clarify "holes near the center of said at least one grid plate are larger than holes near the edge of said at least one grid plate" as described in the specification. Koshimizu in view of Lee and further in view of Maher et al. does not show, teach, or suggest this feature.

Claim 2 was rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over U.S. Patent No. 6,162,323 to Koshimizu in view of U.S. Patent No. 5,453,305 to Lee. Claims 3-7 and 9-12 were objected to as being dependent upon a rejected base claim.

Claims 2-7 and 9-12 depend from Claims 1 and 8 and should be deemed allowable for that reason and on their own merits. For the reasons argued above with respect to the base claims, the prior art of record does not show, teach, or suggest the limitations of the base claims, much less the limitations of the base claims in combination with the additional limitations of the dependent claims.

In view of the amendments and the remarks presented herewith, it is believed that the claims currently in the application accord with the requirements of 35 U.S.C. § 112 and are

allowable over the prior art of record. Therefore, it is urged that the pending claims are in condition for allowance. Reconsideration of the present application is respectfully requested.

Respectfully submitted,



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